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Mr D MacRae
Headteacher
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Dear Mr MacRae

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 27 January 2011 to look at work in English.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of four part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been consistently well above average over recent years. In the most recent national tests, all pupils achieved the expected level and the large majority achieved the higher level of attainment. Exceptionally high standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening are evident throughout the Key Stage, although standards in writing in Year 3 are lower because of the higher number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in this year group. The progress that pupils make throughout Key Stage 2, in all aspects of English, is outstanding.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading is exceptional with consistently well above average outcomes in national tests at the end of Year 2. In writing, the picture varies from above average to slightly below. In the most recent tests, writing was slightly below average and the

reasons for this have been identified and very effective strategies have been put in place to resolve this.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communications, language and literacy that are around those expected for their age. They make good progress so that most achieve, and some exceed, expected levels by the time they transfer to Key Stage 1.
- No groups under-perform and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good, and sometimes exceptional, progress because their needs are identified early on and a good range of support is provided. As a result, very few fail to reach expected levels in both reading and writing by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- The teaching observed was never less than good and most was outstanding. This is because teachers have exceptionally high expectations of pupils' performance, and, because pupils have such a positive attitude towards their learning, they relish the challenge and are keen to aspire to the high standard of work that is expected of them. This is particularly evident in the quality of pupils' writing, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent and pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Lessons are planned extremely well and take careful account of pupils' previous learning so that highly motivational activities are very well matched to pupils' learning needs and interests. The pace of lessons is brisk and teachers model both reading and writing exceptionally well.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, especially with regard to the teaching of phonics. Teaching assistants are well trained and provide consistently good support to both teaching and pupils' learning. Ongoing assessment techniques, such as the use of probing questioning, are used very well to evaluate pupils' understanding of what they are learning, and to adjust lessons so that there is a continuous focus on their learning needs. Classroom resources, such as 'learning walls', are very well used to support and reinforce new learning.
- Rigorous and accurate assessment and monitoring systems are well established and the outcomes are used well to inform planning and set challenging targets. Books are marked well and good use is made of strategies such as success ladders, target books and level descriptors to ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work further.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of pupils of all ages. The school is undertaking a substantial review of the English curriculum to

establish a more rigorous plan for ensuring the progressive development of literacy skills throughout the school. Although the current provision is good, the school recognises that such recent curriculum developments are not yet fully embedded.

- A strength is the way in which English features so strongly across the curriculum. This is particularly well illustrated in the wide range of activities undertaken recently in connection with the school's bi-centennial celebrations. Newer initiatives such as 'Talk for Writing' are having a positive impact on already-high standards, and the school is in the process of embedding strategies such as the use of 'talk partners' to further boost speaking and listening skills and confidence. The English curriculum is further enriched by such activities as book week, trips to see Shakespeare's plays, drama productions and visits by storytellers.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

Leadership and management in English are outstanding.

- Senior leaders have a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas to develop in English because they monitor teaching and pupils' learning and progress rigorously. In spite of consistently high standards in English, there is no sense of complacency and leaders have been proactive in raising standards further. This is illustrated by the steps that have been taken to successfully resolve the dip in writing in Year 2 last summer. Inspection evidence shows that, as a result, pupils are on track to achieve challenging targets in writing in this and all other year groups.
- Staff are well trained and enthusiastic about English. There is a strong sense of professional dialogue and collegiality which helps maintain high standards. English is very well resourced, both in classrooms and in a very efficiently organised library.
- The outcomes of accurate and rigorous assessment, evaluation and monitoring of English throughout the school are used very well to identify suitable priorities for improvement. Strategic plans are detailed, but do not always make it sufficiently clear how success will be measured against outcomes for pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensure that the high standards in English are maintained and further built upon by:
 - embedding new English curriculum plans
 - identifying measurable success criteria in strategic planning which relate to outcomes for pupils.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector